

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PA-02 PRS-01 USIE-00 DODE-00 SS-15

NSC-05 L-02 SP-02 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /037 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/INS:JNACH:MMK

APPROVED BY NEA/INS:DKUX

NEA/P:MVAN ORDER

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

UNCLAS STATE 043735

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IN, US

SUBJECT: SOUTH ASIA PORTIONS OF DEPARTMENT'S FEBRUARY 26
PRESS BRIEFING

FOLLOWING ARE Q'S AND A'S ON SOUTH ASIA AT THE FEBRUARY 26
NOON BRIEFING BY DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN:

Q: HAS THE UNITED STATES BEEN NOTIFIED THAT INDIA WILL
NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE JOINT COMMISSION MEETING IN THE
MIDDLE OF MARCH?

A: WELL, OUR EMBASSY HAS BEEN NOTIFIED THAT FOREIGN
MINISTER CHAVAN WILL POSTPONE HIS VISIT TO THE UNITED
STATES. AND ON THIS I CAN SAY THAT WE, OF COURSE, RESPECT
THE WISHES OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT IN THIS REGARD, AND
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FOR OUR PART WE WILL WELCOME THE VISIT OF THE EXTERNAL
AFFAIRS MINISTER AND THE MEETING OF THE JOINT COMMISSION
WHENEVER THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT WISHES TO ESTABLISH A
MUTUALLY CONVENIENT DATE.

Q: WHENEVER ESTABLISH?

A: WHENEVER THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT WISHES TO ESTABLISH A MUTUALLY CONVENIENT DATE.

Q: WAS ANY REASON GIVEN, BOB, IN THAT MESSAGE TO THE EMBASSY IN NEW DELHI?

A: I HAVE NOT GOT THE -- I SAW SOME TICKERS ON THIS, WHICH IS THE SAME AS THE REPORT I SAW FROM OUR EMBASSY. I HAVEN'T GOT THE TICKERS IN FRONT OF ME.

LET ME DO THAT ON BACKGROUND. I THINK THEY CONSIDERED THE TIMING WAS NOT RIGHT OR SOMETHING. LET ME SEE IF I CAN GET YOU THE ACTUAL TEXT. YOU ALL HAVE SEEN THE SAME TICKERS THAT I HAVE, I THINK.

Q: BOB, MAY I ASK, IT WAS GENERALLY PRETTY WELL KNOWN THAT THE SECRETARY WOULD BE OUT OF THE CITY AT THE TIME THIS HAD BEEN SCHEDULED. WAS IT NOT UNLIKELY THAT THE MEETING WOULD HAVE BEEN DELAYED IN ANY EVENT?

A: I DON'T THINK SO, FOR THIS REASON, THAT THE QUESTION OF THE RETURN OF THE SECRETARY FROM HIS NEXT TRIP, THE TIMING OF THE RETURN HAD NOT BEEN SET; AND WE DID NOT COMMUNICATE WITH THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT WITH REGARD TO ANY POSSIBLE ABSENCE OF THE SECRETARY AT THE TIME OF THE PROJECTED MEETING OF THE JOINT COMMISSION.

Q: WHAT WAS THE DATE FOR THAT, BOB?

A: I THINK IT WAS MARCH 13 AND 14, IF I RECALL CORRECTLY.

Q: WELL, THERE'S REALLY NO QUESTION IN ANYBODY'S MIND, THOUGH, THAT THE SECRETARY WILL NOT BE HERE ON MARCH 13 OR 14, IS THERE?
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A: NO. I WAS JUST POINTING OUT A FACT HERE, THAT THERE WAS NO COMMUNICATION TO THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT THAT THE SECRETARY WOULD NOT BE HERE, BECAUSE IN POINT OF FACT, YOU KNOW, ONE CAN SPECULATE ALL ONE WANTS ON WHEN WE WILL GET BACK, BUT THERE IS NO DEFINITE TIMETABLE SET.

I MIGHT MENTION ONE THING IN CONNECTION WITH THAT THAT I SHOULD HAVE MENTIONED EARLIER, BECAUSE I'M SURE I'LL GET SOME QUESTIONS ON IT ANYWAY, WITH REGARD TO THE SECRETARY'S TRIP.

Q: WELL, BEFORE WE GET INTO THE SECRETARY'S SCHEDULE, I WANT TO GO BACK TO THE POSTPONED MEETING AND ASK IF

THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS ANY COMMENT ON THE OBVIOUS RECORDED FACT THAT THE OPPOSITION EXPRESSED IN THE INDIAN PARLIAMENT TO PURSUING THIS MEETING IN THE WAKE OF THE U.S. ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE LIFTING OF THE ARMS EMBARGO,

FROM AN INDIAN STANDPOINT AS EXPRESSED THERE, MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO PROCEED WITH THIS MEETING. DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAVE ANY COMMENT ON THAT?

A: WELL, OTHER THAN WHAT I SAID TO YOU BEFORE, THAT WE OBVIOUSLY HOPE AND EXPECT THAT THE JOINT COMMISSION WILL MEET AT SOME FUTURE DATE.

IN THIS CONNECTION I MIGHT POINT OUT THAT THE WORK OF THE THREE SUBCOMMISSIONS IS GOING ON, PROGRESSING ALONG VERY NICELY. THAT WORK WILL CONTINUE. WE CONSIDER THIS A POSTPONEMENT OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT AND LOOK FORWARD TO HIS VISIT WHEN A MUTUALLY CONVENIENT TIME CAN BE SET.

Q: WELL, DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAVE ANY FURTHER EXPLANATION OF THE REMARK MADE YESTERDAY BY THE SECRETARY DESCRIBING THE AMBASSADOR'S STATEMENTS HERE AS UNACCEPTABLE BUT DESCRIBING THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S POSITION AS REASONABLE? ANY FURTHER AMPLIFICATION ON THAT DISTINCTION THAT WAS DRAWN BY THE SECRETARY IN LIGHT OF THE SUBSEQUENT ACTION TODAY BY THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT POSTPONING THIS UNCLASSIFIED

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MEETING?

A: NO, I HAVE NO FURTHER AMPLIFICATION ON WHAT THE SECRETARY SAID YESTERDAY WITH REGARD TO THE AMBASSADOR'S STATEMENT HERE AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S STATEMENT BEFORE THE LOK SABHA.

Q: THE SECRETARY HAS SAID THAT THE AMBASSADOR'S REMARKS WERE UNACCEPTABLE. IN REPORTING THAT MR. CHAVAN WILL NOT BE HERE YOU HAVE ELIMINATED THE ONLY KNOWN REASON WHY HE MIGHT NOT BE HERE OTHER THAN THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE EMBARGO. AND THERE AGAIN INDIA INSISTS THAT THE U.S. WAS GUILTY OF DISHONEST ACTION IN THE PAST, AND SO FORTH.

THIS IS A RATHER ODD SITUATION IN WHICH TO ADD NO COMMENT OTHER THAN YOU HOPE A MEETING HAPPENS SOMETIME. DO YOU THINK RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND THE U.S. ARE PRETTY GOOD?

A: YES, I DO. AND I EXPECT THAT, AS THE SECRETARY SAID YESTERDAY, OUR RELATIONS WILL CONTINUE TO IMPROVE. I HAVE NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT IN MY OWN MIND.

Q: BOB, FOLLOWING UP, MRS. GANDHI HAS SAID THAT THE UNITED STATES IN LIFTING THE EMBARGO ACTED ON THE MISTAKEN IMPRESSION THAT PAKISTAN AND INDIA SHOULD BE

EQUATED AS EQUAL POWERS ON THE SUBCONTINENT. DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT ON THAT?

A: ON THAT, I HAVE NOTHING TO ADD TO WHAT ROY ATHERTON SAID. I THINK HE MADE IT VERY CLEAR WHEN HE CAME DOWN AND MET WITH US TWO OR THREE DAYS AGO THAT THIS WASN'T A QUESTION OF PARITY BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN ON THE SUBCONTINENT. THE SECRETARY MADE THIS POINT VERY CLEAR IN HIS NEW DELHI SPEECH LAST OCTOBER. I REALLY CAN'T ADD ANYTHING TO THAT, SPENCE, TO WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN SAID FOR YOU HERE.

Q: BOB, WOULD NOT THE UNITED STATES HAVE ASKED FOR UNCLASSIFIED

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POSTPONEMENT OF THIS MEETING ANYWAY, IF THE INDIANS HADN'T?

A: I CAN'T ANSWER THAT QUESTION. ALL I CAN TELL YOU IS THAT WE DID NOT ASK FOR A POSTPONEMENT, AS I SAID EARLIER, BECAUSE HERE AGAIN THERE IS NO SET FIXED TIME FOR THE SECRETARY'S RETURN. MAYBE IT WOULD HAVE WORKED OUT, AND MAYBE IT WOULDN'T. BUT THE POINT IS, LARS, THAT NO ACTION LIKE THAT WAS TAKEN.

Q: YES, BUT BOB, TO GET THE POINT ACROSS HERE, WOULD THE MEETING BE POSSIBLE IF THE SECRETARY WERE NOT HERE? IS IT POSSIBLE FOR CHAVAN TO COME AND MEET WITH SOMEBODY OTHER THAN THE SECRETARY FOR THIS COMMISSION TO BE HELD SUCCESSFULLY?

A: WELL, I WOULD ASSUME THAT THE SECRETARY -- THIS IS MY OWN VIEW HERE -- I WOULD ASSUME THAT THE SECRETARY OBVIOUSLY WOULD HAVE HOPED TO BE HERE TO GREET AND MEET WITH HIS INDIAN COLLEAGUE, JUST THE WAY, WHEN WE WENT TO NEW DELHI, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER CHAVAN MET AND WAS THE HOST TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE IN NEW DELHI. SO I WOULD ASSUME THAT.

Q: WHEN THESE THINGS WERE ORIGINALLY SET UP, WASN'T THE IDEA THAT THEY WOULD ALWAYS BE AT CABINET LEVEL?

A: THE UMBRELLA JOINT COMMISSION? YES.

Q: BOB, LET ME, IF I CAN RECAP----ARE YOU SAYING THAT YOU DON'T CONSIDER THERE'S A LINK BETWEEN THE ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT THE RESUMPTION OF ARMS SALES TO PAKISTAN AND THE

POSTPONEMENT OF THE CHAVAN VISIT?

A: NO, I WAS ASKED, I BELIEVE, IF THERE WAS A LINK
BETWEEN REPORTS THAT THE SECRETARY WOULD NOT BE HERE.

Q: NO, I'M ASKING YOU, ARE YOU SAYING THAT IN YOUR
MIND THERE IS NO LINK BETWEEN THE DECISION ANNOUNCED
HERE ABOUT ARMS SALES AND THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE CHAVAN
VISIT?

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A: I WOULD NOT DISMISS AT ALL THAT THERE IS SUCH A LINK.
I CANNOT MAKE THE INTERPRETATION FOR THE INDIAN GOVERN-
MENT OF THE REASON FOR THE POSTPONEMENT. BUT THAT
WOULD BE A LOGICAL ASSUMPTION.

Q: SECONDLY, YOU WERE SAYING THAT DESPITE THE FACT THAT
THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAS POSTPONED HIS VISIT IN ANGRY
WORDS, AND THE AMBASSADOR HAS MADE REMARKS THAT THE
SECRETARY OF STATE HAS DISMISSED AS UNACCEPTABLE, THAT
RELATIONS ARE GOOD AND ARE CONTINUING TO IMPROVE.

A: I THINK RELATIONS WILL CONTINUE TO IMPROVE, YES.

Q: DID INDIA DELIVER A FORMAL PROTEST YESTERDAY? I
THINK THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT SUCH PROTEST WOULD BE
HANDLED OVER YESTERDAY.

A: I AM UNAWARE OF ANY FORMAL PROTEST, NOTE OR ANYTHING,
HAVING BEEN DELIVERED.

Q: WILL YOU TAKE THE QUESTION, PLEASE?

A: IF I AM WRONG, I WILL LET YOU KNOW. BUT I WENT INTO
THIS SUBJECT IN QUITE SOME DETAIL THIS MORNING, AND THIS
ASPECT DID NOT COME UP, SO I AM ASSUMING THERE WAS NONE.
(SEE END FOR INFORMATION SUPPLIED LATER.)

Q: ON BACKGROUND, WHEN WE ASKED ABOUT WHETHER THE
INDIANS GAVE ANY REASON, YOU SAID THAT YOU HADN'T SEEN
ANYTHING BUT THE TICKERS. BUT THEN ON BACKGROUND YOU
SAID YOU BELIEVED THAT THEY SAID THE TIMING WAS NOT
RIGHT. DO YOU INTEND TO GET US SOME MORE PRECISE---?

A: I WILL SEE WHAT I CAN DO ON THAT. IF I HAD THE
TICKERS HERE, THAT WOULD HELP JOG MY MEMORY, BUT I DON'T.

Q: BOB, JUST ON THE DATES, I NOTED THAT ON THE NOTICE
BOARD A COUPLE DAYS AGO, IT WAS SPECIFICALLY STATED
THAT DR. KISSINGER WOULD BE AWAY UP TO THE 15TH.

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A: I WOULD LOVE TO SEE IT. I DON'T KNOW WHAT BULLETIN BOARD THIS IS AND I DON'T KNOW WHO PUT IT UP. I AM UNAWARE OF IT. THE ONLY THING I DO KNOW THAT I ASKED BE PUT UP WAS A SIGN-UP LIST FOR A POSSIBLE TRIP TO

CARDIFF AND THE MIDDLE EAST, BUT THERE ARE NOT DATES OR ANYTHING. I MEAN, I'D LIKE TO SEE IT.

Q: I'D LIKE TO GET SOME MORE CLARIFICATION ON THIS. ARE YOU LEAVING THE IMPRESSION THAT THE SECRETARY WOULD HAVE RETURNED TO AT LEAST GOTTEN THE MEETING UNDER WAY WITH MINISTER CHAVAN, IF CHAVAN HAD NOT CALLED OFF THE TRIP?

A: NO, I AM NOT TRYING TO LEAVE THAT IMPRESSION. IF THE MEETING WAS GOING TO GO FORWARD AS SCHEDULED, AND IF IT TURNED OUT THAT THE SECRETARY COULD NOT HAVE RETURNED IN TIME, OBVIOUSLY THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO SEE IF A SUITABLY CONVENIENT TIME COULD HAVE BEEN REARRANGED. OBVIOUSLY THAT IS WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN DONE.

Q: BOB, I DON'T LIKE TO BADGER ON THIS, BUT IF YOU LOOK AT THE RECORD ON THE SEQUENCE WE HAVE HAD HERE ON THE INDIA THING, YOU WILL SEE THAT WE HAVE GOT AN EXTREME AMOUNT OF DISJOINTED RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS HERE. IS IT THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S POSITION THAT IT WANTS TO COOL DOWN THE DISPUTE WITH INDIA OVER THE LIFTING OF THE ARMS EMBARGO? CAN YOU BE MORE EXPLICIT ABOUT WHAT THE U.S. POSITION IS AT THIS POINT?

A: WELL, FRANKLY, MURREY, ON THIS, I THINK THE SECRETARY WENT INTO IT YESTERDAY IN GREAT DETAIL IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, AND HE SPELLED OUT OUR POLICY AND WHAT THIS DECISION MEANT. AND I JUST CAN'T ADD ANYTHING TO IT, IN THIS CASE.

FOLLOWING Q AND A WAS LATER ADDED TO RECORD:

Q: DID INDIA DELIVER A FORMAL PROTEST? I THINK THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT SUCH A PROTEST WOULD BE HANDED OVER.
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A: WHEN INFORMED OF OUR DECISION TO LIFT THE ARMS EMBARGO, INDIAN AMBASSADOR KAUL LODGED AN ORAL PROTEST WITH ACTING SECRETARY INGERSOLL FEBRUARY 19. FOLLOWING THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF OUR DECISION FEBRUARY 24 MINISTER-COUNSELOR OF THE INDIAN EMBASSY GONSALVES LODGED AN ORAL PROTEST WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE

ATHERTON FEBRUARY 25. KISSINGER

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 26 AUG 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS CONFERENCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE043735
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA/INS:JNACH:MMK
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: D750068-0447
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750287/baaaagso.tel
Line Count: 328
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 MAY 2003 by SilvaL0>; APPROVED <21 JAN 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: n/a
TAGS: PFOR, IN, US
To: NEW DELHI INFO ISLAMABAD
DACCA
COLOMBO
KATHMANDU
KABUL
TEHRAN

Type: TE

Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006